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Software service for facilitating unbiased ratings

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Software service for facilitating unbiased ratings

ABSTRACT

Online application stores, e.g., that enable users to download software applications to a user device, include rating systems that allow users to provide ratings and reviews. Some application developers attempt to obtain favorable reviews for their apps by first asking users if they are enjoying the app, and requesting a review only from the users that answer affirmatively to provide a review. As a result, the ratings and reviews for such applications on the store may be skewed.

This disclosure describes a service for obtaining unbiased ratings directly from users. An application store that utilizes the techniques sends a ratings box to be displayed within an ad unit of the app. The user is provided with options to fill the ratings box within the ad to provide ratings for the app. This occurs without influence from the app itself. The ratings box is provided to a randomized sample of raters. Pre-emptive questions that filter out unfavorable reviews are avoided. The ad unit transmits the user-provided ratings to the online application store. Application developers that enable deployment of such direct evaluation techniques can be given benefits, e.g., better placement in the application store, a badge of approval, etc.

KEYWORDS

app ratings; ratings bias; online ads; mobile ads; online application store; app downloads; app ratings

BACKGROUND

Online application stores, e.g., that enable users to download software applications to a user device, include rating systems that allow users to provide ratings and reviews. Some application developers attempt to obtain favorable reviews for their apps by first asking users if

they are enjoying the app, and requesting a review only from the users that answer affirmatively to provide a review. As a result, the ratings and reviews for such applications on the store may be skewed.

DESCRIPTION

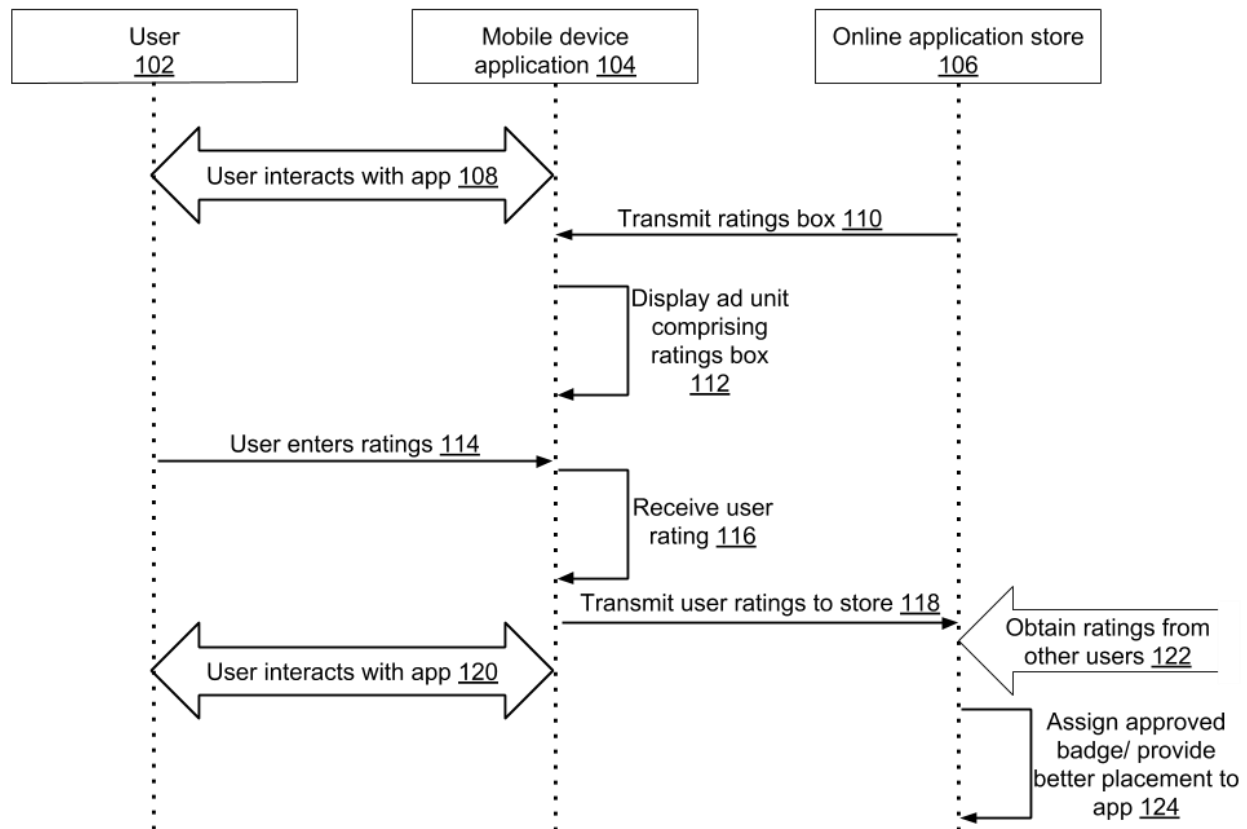


Fig. 1: Obtaining app ratings from users via rating boxes in ad units

Fig. 1 illustrates obtaining app ratings from users via rating boxes served via advertisements, per techniques of this disclosure. A user (102) interacts (108) with a software application, e.g., mobile device application (104). The app developer provides slots for displaying ads within the application.

The app store (106) provides a ratings box (110) via an advertisement and selects an ad unit for the ratings box to be displayed (112). When the user enters ratings (114) within the ad

unit, such ratings obtained. User selection for displaying the ratings box is done in a randomized fashion. The ratings box in the ad unit is designed to avoid pre-emptive or leading questions, e.g., for a game that is being rated, questions such as “are you enjoying the game” are not posed to the user. Rather, the ratings box enables the user rates the app directly and without influence from the app itself.

Computations pertaining to the ratings are handled within the advertisement (or by the ad provider) such that the user is not redirected to the app store to provide the ratings. The ratings received via the ad unit (116) are transmitted to the online application store (118) while the user continues normal interaction with the app (120). The app store obtains ratings from other users (122), e.g., users who have provided ratings via ads, and calculates and displays an aggregate rating. Since such ratings are obtained directly from users, without participation of the app developer, the ratings are likely to be unbiased. Application developers that enable deployment of such direct evaluation techniques can be given benefits, e.g., better placement in the application store, a badge of approval, etc. (124). On platforms that do not support obtaining user ratings within an interactive ad, the user is forwarded to the application store ratings interface.

Users are provided with options to dismiss the ratings box without providing ratings, or provide partial ratings. User-provided ratings are obtained with user permission, and in a manner that indicates to the user that their ratings would be provided to online application stores.

Further to the descriptions above, a user may be provided with controls allowing the user to make an election as to both if and when systems, programs or features described herein may enable collection of user information (e.g., information about a user’s social network, social actions or activities, profession, a user’s preferences, or a user’s current location), and if the user is sent content or communications from a server. In addition, certain data may be treated in one

or more ways before it is stored or used, so that personally identifiable information is removed. For example, a user's identity may be treated so that no personally identifiable information can be determined for the user, or a user's geographic location may be generalized where location information is obtained (such as to a city, ZIP code, or state level), so that a particular location of a user cannot be determined. Thus, the user may have control over what information is collected about the user, how that information is used, and what information is provided to the user.

CONCLUSION

This disclosure describes a service for obtaining unbiased ratings directly from users of software applications, e.g., mobile apps. An application store that utilizes the techniques sends a ratings box to be displayed within an ad unit of the app. The user is provided with options to fill the ratings box within the ad to provide ratings for the app. This occurs without influence from the app itself. The ratings box is provided to a randomized sample of raters. Pre-emptive questions that filter out unfavorable reviews are avoided. With user permission, the ad unit transmits the user-provided ratings to the online application store. Application developers that enable deployment of such direct evaluation techniques can be given benefits, e.g., better placement in the application store, a badge of approval, etc.